

SPECIAL EARTH FAIR ISSUE - Spring 2002

GREEN BRINGS WATERSHED EDUCATION TO SAN DIEGO



Julie Schultz of Earth Force GREEN (right) shows participants how to create a low-cost model of a watershed

The County of San Diego, Department of Planning and Land Use, MSCP Division hosted a Earth Force GREEN (Global Rivers Environmental Education Network) training workshop at the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College on March 25, 2002. Participants included George Stratman, Director of Outdoor Education for the County of San Diego Office of Education, staff from County Departments of Planning and Land Use, Parks and Recreation, Environmental Health and the City of San Diego, The Environmental Trust, Otay Water Authority, Helix Water District, and Solana Recyclers. The workshop included water monitoring and other interactive activities as well as Earth Force GREEN *Protecting Our Watershed* curriculum training.

Earth Force GREEN is a watershed education program geared towards middle school students that connects learning with youth action and youth voice. Dr. William Stapp of the University of Michigan founded GREEN in 1984 when a group of students asked him to help them investigate a number of

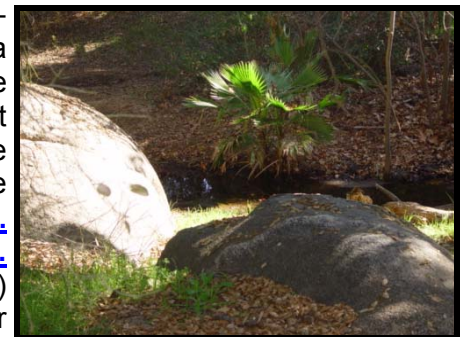
cases of individuals who had contracted hepatitis from the Huron River. With Dr. Stapp's help, the students discovered the cause of the problem and worked with the local government to find a solution. Educators all across the United States and in Canada and South America are currently using the Earth Force GREEN *Protecting Our Watershed* curriculum because it gives them a step-by-step process to guide young people in improving the health of their water resources. Students are not only taught what a watershed is through various interactive activities, classroom learning and field experience, but they are also given the opportunity to make lasting changes in their communities. The County of San Diego hopes to start an Earth Force GREEN project soon in a watershed near you.

The MSCP Outreach Committee (see page 6 for more information about the MSCP Outreach Committee) will be coordinating the San Diego County Earth Force GREEN program with local agencies to determine preserve locations within the MSCP Preserve that can serve as "outdoor classrooms" for participants.

If you are interested in starting a Earth Force GREEN project at your school, please contact Christine Chau at Christine.Chou@sdcounty.ca.gov or (858) 694-3719. For

more information about Earth Force, GREEN, and the MSCP, visit the following websites:

www.earthforce.org, www.green.org, www.msdp-sandiego.org.



The Environmental Trust's Caldwell-Crest property is the perfect site for a Earth Force GREEN project.



USGS AND MSCP - PARTNERS IN MAINTAINING BIODIVERSITY

by Gloria Maender and Kathie Meyer, USGS Western Ecological Research Center



Western red bat:

What do bats, arroyo toads, and western pond turtles have in common? They share a common link to riparian areas, where the bats forage, the toads breed, and the turtles just call home. They are also the focus of a new cooperative effort by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the County of San Diego's MSCP. Fieldwork by scientists at the USGS Western Ecological Research Center's San Diego Field Station will be underway this spring, with USGS conducting two-year surveys to evaluate the current distribution and status of bats, arroyo toads and western pond turtles in the MSCP preserve. California Department of Fish and Game Natural Communities Conservation Planning (NCCP) Local Assistance Grant funding in a total amount of \$286,744 make these projects possible. The NCCP Program is an unprecedented effort by the State of California and numerous private and public partners that takes a broad-based ecosystem approach to planning for the protection and perpetuation of biological diversity. The focus of the initial effort was the coastal sage scrub habitat of Southern California, home to the California gnatcatcher and approximately 100 other potentially threatened or endangered species. This habitat is scattered over more than 6,000 square miles and encompasses large parts of three counties - Orange, San Diego, and Riverside - and smaller portions of two others - Los Angeles and San Bernardino.

Southern California is a region characterized by both unparalleled natural biodiversity, and economic and population growth, which may threaten many native species and habitats. As a result, this region has more endangered and threatened species than any other area in the continental United States, and once-extensive natural communities, many of which are unique to the area, have been reduced to fragmented remnants.

Conserving natural areas and the species reliant upon them in this rapidly urbanizing area has greatly challenged decision makers, and is reflected in the

trend towards multi-species and habitat-based planning. USGS serves Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) partners by providing scientific expertise for the better planning and management of reserves.

The NCCP's goal to preserve coastal sage scrub habitat in Southern California has been the subject of USGS study and research projects for partner agencies. These projects have resulted in the accumulation of data on 46 species of reptiles and amphibians and more than 50,000 individuals. The County of San Diego MSCP is one of the 13 sub-areas within the NCCP program benefited by this effort. USGS aims to provide the County of San Diego MSCP a more complete picture of the current distribution of these species within the planning area by conducting surveys. Field biologists examining potential habitats



*Kathie Meyer pulling a trap:
USGS/ photo by Jeff Lovich*

along a number of major stream courses as well as, in the case of the bats, evaluating potential roost areas, will conduct these surveys. In addition, bats may be surveyed utilizing mist nets and electronic devices that can identify bat vocalization.

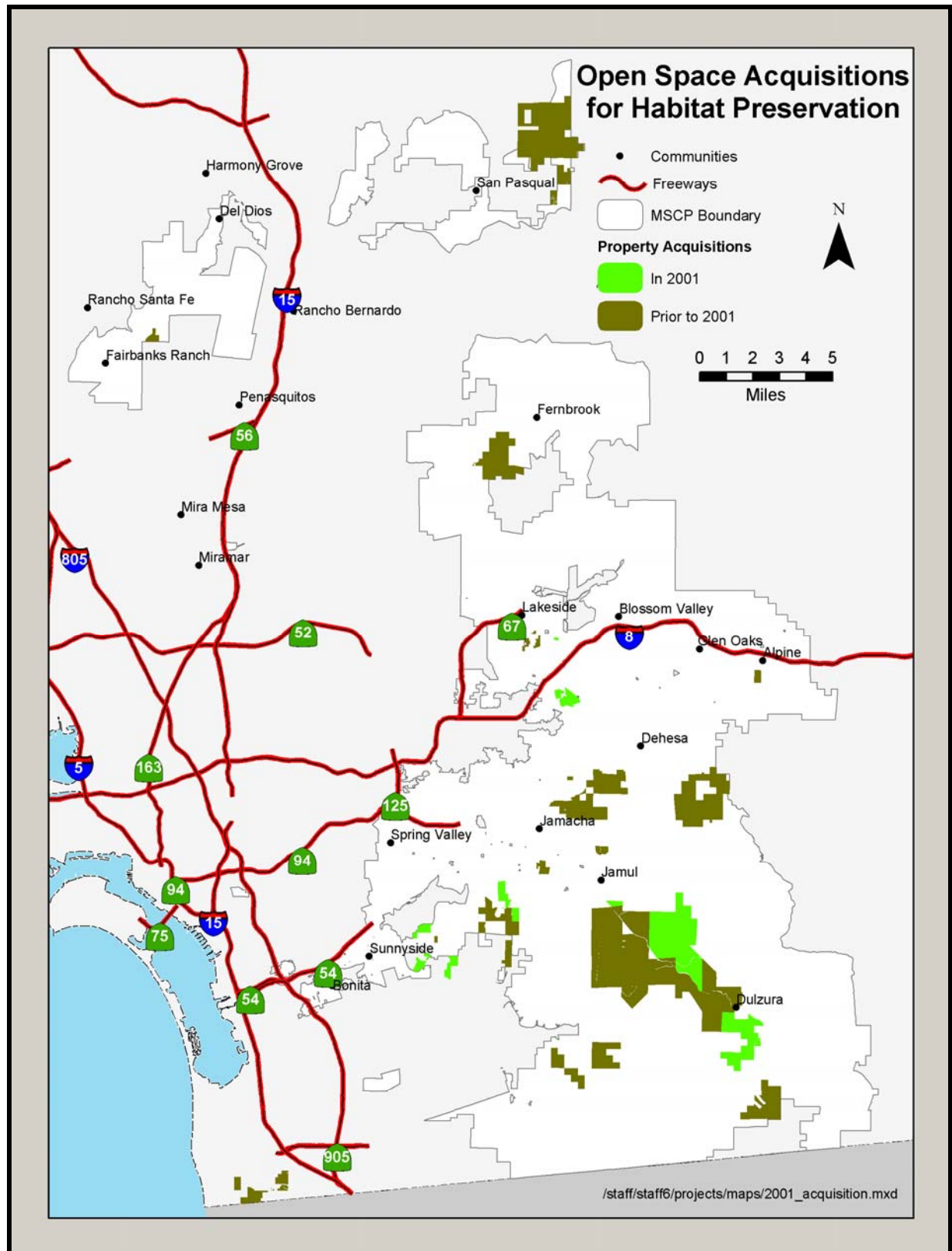
Data collected by USGS scientists will contribute to the development of the management plans for some of the important areas used by these animals. Their efforts will provide information on the presence and distribution of these species as well as habitat value and population status leading to recommendations decision makers can use to better manage these riparian-associated species within the reserve system. Additionally, USGS researchers will be able to identify long-term monitoring sites to measure the success of the MSCP in preserving these species. Land managers within the MSCP will be able to alleviate impacts or threats identified in the USGS surveys through adaptive management.



For other examples of how USGS is involved in other HCPs, visit the website at www.werc.usgs.gov/hcp/.
science for a changing world



The MSCP has continued to make substantial progress in building the MSCP Preserve. Since Earth Day 2001, 4,300 acres were added to the Preserve through acquisitions of open space by the Federal, State and County governments. These new preserve areas are depicted by green on the map below.





WESTERN SNOWY PLOVER



Lorraine Elrod, California Academy of Sciences

The Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrius nivosus*) is one of 85 species covered under the MSCP. In 1993, the Pacific Coast population of this species was designated as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act. Historically, Western snowy plovers nested on beaches along the entire Pacific Coast. Now they are rarely seen.

Specialized species, like the Western snowy plover, have specific adaptations, and therefore live only in one or a few habitats. The Pacific Coast population tends to nest in open sandy areas with small dunes, driftwood, and sparse vegetation. Newly hatched chicks are the size of a cotton ball and are very difficult to see. Therefore, Western snowy plovers are extremely vulnerable to trampling of nests. Chicks are exposed to risks of disturbance-related nest abandonment, and adult/chick separation.

Habitat destruction is the main cause of the Western snowy plover's decline. Driftwood and kelp are essential to supporting the diverse animal and plant populations on beaches. Therefore, do not collect driftwood and kelp that wash up on beaches on which the plovers nest. Driftwood provides some of the only shelter on the beach, while kelp serves as the basis for the beach and dune food chain.



The goal of the Western snowy plover Recovery Plan is to have a stable plover population of 3,000 birds by 2025.

STATUS OF MSCP NORTH COUNTY SUBAREA PLAN

The County Department of Planning and Land Use has been working with its planning consultants, AMEC and TAIC, to prepare the MSCP North County Subarea Plan. The area covered by the Plan extends from the lands north of Camp Pendleton to the Riverside County line, east to the boundary of the Cleveland National Forest and Rancho Guejito and east of the community of Ramona, and south to Barona. It also includes the Olivenhain and Elfin Forest area that is surrounded by incorporated city lands.

As we indicated in earlier versions of *MSCP News*, due to requirements in State regulations, the County has been working with a number of independent science advisors to review the approach and model information for the MSCP North County Subarea Plan. These advisors include nationally recognized experts on resource conservation. A meeting with these advisors was held in the spring of 2001, and they recommended a number of revisions for the modeling process as well as the use of an additional model called the SITES reserve selection algorithm. The County and its consultants modified the modeling process and evaluated the SITES model to address their recommendations.



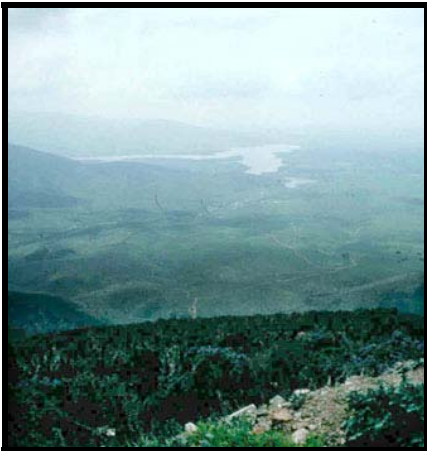
Scott Fleury of TAIC discusses the modeling process.

In February, the advisors met again and were presented with the results, including the SITES model that can be used to assist in the identification of pre-approved mitigation areas for the MSCP North County Subarea Plan. A written report that summarizes the advisors' conclusions states, "There is absolutely no doubt among us that this is a cutting-edge conservation plan with the rare combination of scientific defensibility and pragmatism."

The County will present the draft model during a workshop at the San Diego County Planning Commission on April 19, 2002, at 5201 Ruffin Road, Suite B; San Diego, CA 92123. The meeting starts at 9:00 a.m. Following the workshop, there will be additional outreach meetings to allow input from the community. Please visit the MSCP website at www.mscp-sandiego.org for exact times and locations.



NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FUNDING SHORTFALL



San Diego National Refuge Wildlife: photo by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The National Wildlife Refuge system is facing a \$2 billion backlog of funding that is affecting endangered species across the country including those that make San Diego County home. The National Wildlife Refuge System is comprised of 538 refuges and 94 million acres of land and water in all

states and U.S. territories. The San Diego Refuge Complex, which has more threatened and endangered species than anywhere else in the continental United States, is suffering the effects of a decade of insufficient federal funding. Even though the San Diego Refuge was created specifically to reverse the decline of various species, federal funding shortfalls have made it difficult for United States Fish and Wildlife Service staff to perform their basic duties and adequately monitor endangered species and their habitats.

A broad-based coalition of conservationists and outdoor recreation enthusiasts, the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement, released a report in November, ***Shortchanging America's Wildlife***, that calls upon President Bush and Congress to increase the Refuge System budget from \$300 million to \$700 million annually in FY 2003 to save a legacy created by President Theodore Roosevelt nearly one-hundred years ago for the benefit of future generations. ***Shortchanging America's Wildlife*** finds that:

- Most refuges are operated with only minimal staffing and approximately 200 refuges have no staff on-site.
- Refuge visitation grows at such a rate that installation and maintenance of visitor facilities and services can no longer be considered a luxury.
- Invasive exotic species, inadequate water supplies, aging facilities and equipment and

other problems plague many refuges, making it difficult to meet their conservation mission.

- Management Programs to help recover endangered species, sustain waterfowl, restore damaged habitats and address threats to water quality and other problems are left unaccomplished on an alarming number of refuges.

County Supervisor Greg Cox expressed his support for additional funding for the Wildlife Refuges at a Press Conference held on December 17, 2001, at the Chula Vista Nature Center. "Without adequate funding for biological study, and the restoration and management of hundreds of acres of wetland, riparian and upland habitat, San Diego's many diverse species face a grave future," emphasized Supervisor Cox, whose district includes a small but critical urban refuge at the southern end of San Diego Bay. "Americans, including many of our local groups, volunteer more than one million hours in service annually and contribute millions of dollars directly to the National Wildlife System, but individuals cannot stand alone. Our federal government must stop short-changing the refuge system to protect our legacy for future generations."

The Supervisor was joined by other elected officials including Representative Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R, 51st District) and Representative Bob Filner (D, 50th District). Also invited to attend were Susan Fuller, President, Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges; Jonathan Birdsong, Senior Conservation Associate, Izaak Walton League; Laura Hunter, Clean Bay Campaign Director, Environmental Health Coalition; and Kevin Doyle, Director of Habitat Conservation Programs, National Wildlife Federation, Western Field Office. County Supervisor Dianne Jacob was unable to attend, but also supports increased funding for the Refuge.

Increased funding will enable the San Diego Refuge Complex to meet its management and monitoring responsibilities under the MSCP and will allow for coordinating and integrating local trail and other recreational opportunities with the refuge.

You can review a full copy of *Shortchanging America's Wildlife* by visiting <http://www.defenders.org/habitat/new/shortchanging.pdf>.



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Return Service Requested

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Join us at Earth Fair in Balboa Park on **Sunday, April 21, 2002!** This annual event sponsored by San Diego Earthworks includes food, fun and entertainment for the entire family! Be sure to stop by the County of San Diego MSCP booth as well as other County and MSCP affiliated booths! We look forward to seeing you there!
- NEW ONLINE!** Visit www.mscp-sandiego.org to find out what's new on the MSCP website!!

Click on the link, "What's Really New," and choose from a variety of topics. The County's new mitigation bank website is up and running! There you will find maps and information on mitigation banks throughout San Diego County.

- The County of San Diego Watershed Protection, Stormwater Management and Discharge Control Ordinance (Stormwater Ordinance) and Stormwater Standards Manual are available to the public at www.projectcleanwater.org.

GREETINGS FROM THE MSCP OUTREACH COMMITTEE



MSCP Outreach Committee (l-r): Don Hunsaker III, The Environmental Trust; Cailin Ni Chruaiaich (Chair), County Parks; Paul Kucharczyk, County Parks; Christine Chau, County DPLU; Barbara Simon, USFWS; Marsha Cook, County DEH; Melissa Harrington (Vice-Chair), The Environmental Trust.

The MSCP Outreach Committee consists of representatives from a number of partners in the MSCP effort including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, San Diego Natural History Museum, The Environmental Trust, City of San Diego and County of San Diego MSCP, Parks and Recreation and Environmental Health Departments. The Committee's goal is to increase environmental awareness in San Diego County.

Much of its attention is focused on environmental education. The Committee hopes to educate San Diego youth so that they may have greater opportunities for learning about the MSCP and the environment in general and use this knowledge to make lasting changes in their communities. Stay tuned for updates on the MSCP Outreach Committee in future issues of *MSCP News*.

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